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ABSTRACT

Previous research (Bem, 1976) has shown that sex-typed and androgynous persons differ in their behavior in a variety of situations. The present paper describes four studies of the relationship of sex-typing to sexual socialization and to heterosexual attitudes and behavior. This program of research indicates that persons do differ in their sexual socialization and in their career and family plans as a function of the extent to which they are sex-typed. Investigation of the attitudinal and behavioral differences between sex-typed and andro-gynous persons in the context of heterosexual interaction, however, suggests that although there are some differences in their sexual attitudes and behavior, they do not differ in their responses to persons who engage in cross-sex behavior (female active, male passive) in bed. On the other hand, large and consistent differences as a function of gender emerged in the studies involving heterosexual interaction. It was concluded that gender is far more potent than extent of sex-typing in influencing heterosexual interaction. (Author)

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Heterosexuality and Sex-typing

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Heterosexuality and Sex-typing

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Throughout the history of our species (including the period during which most of us were socialized) we have operated on the assumption that differentiation between the sexes--in our roles, tasks, needs, and attitudes, and in our personal and interpersonal styles--was an essential and healthy part of being a man or woman (Goslin, 1969). At present, however, we are undergoing a massive transition from extreme sex role differentiation to sex role egalitarianism. Bem and her colleagues (See Bem, 1976, for a general review) have been involved in exploring the influence of this shift by comparing the behavior of people who differ in the extent to which they have internalized stereotypic sex role norms. To conduct this research, Bem (1974) designed an inventory which treats masculine and feminine identification as independent dimensions. In responding to the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI), one indicates the extent to which stereotypically feminine traits are self-descriptive. Operationally defined, then, a sex-typed person is one who gives significantly higher endorsement to traits which are stereotypic of his or her gender. An androgynous person, on the other hand, does not differ in the endorsement he or she gives to masculine and feminine traits. In a series of studies of the influence of sex-typed versus androgynous identification, Bem has found that sex-typing is related to subjects' tendency to conform to others' opinions (Bem, 1975), their willingness to engage in cross-sex behavior (Bem & Lenney, 1976), and their tendency to be nurturant (Bem, 1975; 1976). In general, androgynous subjects appear to be able to respond in situationally appropriate ways even when such responses do not conform to gender stereotypic norms. In

contrast, sex-typed persons appear to avoid responses which are stereotypic of the opposite sex. Thus far, however, Bem's research has been confined to the influence of sex-typing on relatively simple tasks outside of the arena of heterosexual relations.

In an attempt to examine the influence of sex role identification on issues relevant to relations between the sexes, I have conducted a series of four studies. In the first study, I hypothesized that androgynous persons would differ from sex-typed persons in their family and career plans (Allgeier, 1975a). In particular, I felt that androgynous females would be less likely to give exclusive emphasis to becoming productive mothers than would sex-typed females. Results indicated that androgynous females wanted to have significantly fewer children (mean = 2.1) than did sex-typed females (mean = 3.1). Among the other results in that study was the finding that although androgynous females did not differ from sex-typed females in the importance they placed on becoming good parents, they did place more importance on becoming competent at their work than did sex-typed females.

Operating on the assumption that the difference in extent of sex-typing among adults is a function of different socialization histories, I conducted a second study (Allgeier, 1975b) in which I examined the sexual socialization of sex-typed and androgynous persons. Results indicated that androgynous persons were raised in homes in which open discussion of sex occurred more frequently than was true for sex-typed persons. Further, androgynous persons, as compared to sex-typed persons, indicated that they felt less guilt over masturbation, tended to rate their mothers as more comfortable in discussing both the biological aspects of reproduction and the emotional aspects of sexuality, and to begin their contraceptive education at an earlier age.

As in the first study, androgynous persons desired fewer children than did sex-typed persons. In addition, they were willing to conceive fewer times in the attempt to produce a son than was true of sex-typed persons.

Thus far, my research on the influence of sex-typing on sexual attitudes and behavior had been both correlational and cautious. Given Rubin's (1976) experience with Congressional attempts to prevent his investigation of the effects of marijuana on sexual responses, such caution is perhaps understandable. Nonetheless, last fall, I plunged into the sex research waters more boldly by exposing students to color slides (Schmidt & Sigusch, 1970) of nude couples engaging in man-above versus woman-above coitus. Thirty years ago, Kinsey (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948) estimated that 70% of the American population had never attempted to use anything but the man-above position. Hunt's (1974) data, collected in the 1970's, however, indicated that the man-above coital position norm is changing: nearly 75% of the married males in his sample used the woman-above position occasionally. Since our coital position norms appeared to be in transition, it seemed to me that sex-typed and androgynous persons might differ in their responses to a couple engaging in the woman-above position. Accordingly, after observing a series of slides of a couple engaging in sexual intercourse in either the man-above or the woman-above position, subjects were asked to evaluate the couple along the dimensions of adjustment, cleanliness, respectability, morality, goodness, femininity (masculinity), sophistication, desirability as a spouse, and desirability as a parent (Allgeier & Fogel, manuscript in preparation). Much to my surprise, sex-typed and androgynous persons did not differ in their responses to the couple as a function of coital position. Further, coital position, per se, influenced subjects on only one rating--the man in the man-above position was perceived as more masculine than the man in the woman-above position. Internal contrasts of the consistent position by subjects' gender interactions, however, indicated that females rated the woman-above couple more negatively than they did the man-above couple. Specifically, females

rated the woman as dirtier, less respectable, less moral, less good, less desirable as a wife, and less desirable as a mother, when she was on top than when she was on the bottom during intercourse. Similarly, females rated the man as dirtier, less respectable, less moral, and less masculine when he was having coitus with the woman on top than when he was in the superior position in bed. Ratings given by males, on the other hand, did not differ significantly as a function of the couples' coital position, although their responses to the woman-above couple tended to be more positive than to the man-above couple.

My interest in conducting this study in the first place was not in sex differences, of course, but rather in the effect of sex role identification on responses to out-of-role behavior in bed, and, as noted, sex role identification appeared to have no influence. In the midst of trying to understand this, I came across Zeldow's (1976) study in which he found, contrary to his expectations, that androgynous and sex-typed persons did not differ in their responses to Spence and Helmreich's (1972) Attitudes Towards Women Scale. Given the failure of subjects' attitudes to others' role behaviors to vary as a function of sex-typing in both Zeldow's (1976) study and in the present study, it may be that the influence of sex role identification is limited to subjects' choices for themselves. In retrospect, this would not be surprising since in taking the BSRI, subjects are asked to indicate their endorsement of masculine and feminine traits as self-descriptive rather than to indicate their approval of these traits. The other possibility, of course, is that while sex-typing does influence the kinds of behavior that Bem (1976) has investigated--tasks which do not involve heterosexual interaction--sex-typing may exert little influence on subjects in their relations with the opposite sex.

To explore the extent to which sex-typing does influence subjects' attitudes and behavior in the context of their own heterosexual interaction, I

conducted a fourth study in which sex-typed and androgynous persons responded to an interpersonal relations questionnaire (Allgeier, manuscript in preparation). Specifically, subjects were asked their attitudes and behavior regarding the initiation of, and economic responsibility for dating, and their attitudes and behavior toward the initiation of, and positions taken during, sexual intercourse. They were also asked their attitudes toward marital, economic and parental roles. Analysis of their responses indicated that there were tendencies for androgynous males to be less positive toward having sex, toward initiating sex, and toward being the recipients of female initiation of sex, than sex-typed males, but these differences did not quite reach significance and there were no other attitudinal differences toward dating or sex in males as a function of sex-typing. With respect to behavior, on the other hand, androgynous males were the recipients of more invitations for dates and for sexual intercourse by females than were sex-typed males. However, sex-typed males actually engaged in sex more frequently in the past year, and tended to initiate sexual intercourse a greater percentage of the time than did androgynous males. In their attitudes toward parental roles, sex-typed males were more positive toward having their future wives take the primary responsibility for childrearing than were androgynous males.

The data on the influence of sex-typing in males were presented first mainly because the differences are more consistent. Although sex-typing does appear to influence the responses of females, its effect is somewhat contradictory. In line with expectations, androgynous females tended to have engaged in intercourse more frequently in the past year, and to have more positive attitudes toward initiating sex with a man than do sex-typed females. In addition, androgynous females were more positive toward working full time than were sex-typed females. However, sex-typed females appeared to respond more "androgynously" than androgynous females did on several items. That is, sex-typed females, as compared with androgynous females, were more positive

in their attitudes toward paying for dates, and actually tended to pay for more dates in the past year. Sex-typed females were also more negative toward taking most of the childcare responsibility than were androgynous females.

Thus, although sex-typing did have some influence on subjects' heterosexual attitudes and behavior in this study, the influence was neither strong nor particularly consistent. As in the study in which subjects responded to "cross-sex" behavior in bed (Allgeier & Fogel, manuscript in preparation) the main factor in the present study appeared to be gender. With respect to sexual attitudes, males were less positive than females toward initiating dates, but more positive than females toward women paying for dates, and far more positive than females toward women initiating dates. Highly significant differences also emerged on attitudes toward sexual interaction with males being more positve toward male initiation of sex, female initiation of sex, and having sex in the man-above position. In their attitudes toward marital and parental roles, males and females also differed with males being more positve toward marrying a women who chooses not to work and who takes primary responsibility for childrearing than females are. Similarly, males were more negative than females toward sharing responsibility for childrearing.

In conclusion, Bem and her colleagues have found that sex-typed and androgynous persons differ in their behavior in contexts other than heterosexual interaction, and my research has indicated that there are differences in the sexual socialization, and family and career plans of adults as a function of sex-typing. Investigation of the attitudinal and behavioral differences between sex-typed and androgynous persons in the context of heterosexual interaction, however, suggests that while there are some differences in their sexual attitudes and behavior, they do not differ in their responses to persons who engage in cross-sex behavior in bed. On the other hand, large and con-

sistent differences emerged in both of the studies involving heterosexual interaction as a function of gender. Therefore, although I intend to continue to explore the influence of sex-typing on sexual behavior, at this point, I have to conclude that gender is far more potent than sex role identification in influencing our heterosexual interaction.

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